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OWEN AND THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALISTS.

TO the attentive student of English economic history, nothing can be more striking than the great transformation effected in the spirit in which social problems and the relations of the working classes are discussed at the present day. The rise of the factory system with its attendant abuses ; the narrow class legislation of Parliament which left the operatives without any adequate protection and at the same time severely repressed all attempts at combination ; the vicious system which regulated wages and prices through the fiat of peace justices ; and finally the unfortunate wages-fund theory of orthodox economists — all these causes combined to produce in the higher classes a feeling of indifference, in the laboring population a spirit of sullen and dogged resistance which occasionally found vent in violent outbreaks and finally culminated in the Chartist movement. To-day the state of affairs is materially altered. Trades-unions are no longer regarded as revolutionary or illegitimate ; their just demands are recognized and their aspirations favored. Eminent economists and noble lords preside at their congresses and conventions. Remedial legislation has been introduced to remove crying abuses and redress absolute wrongs. The dogmas of the Manchester sect are being supplanted by the doctrines of the historical school ; and, above all, the whole tone of current discussion and the point of view adopted by employers afford abundant proof that the antagonism of class interests is by no means so acute as in the generation gone by. In England, which has far outstripped us in the path of economic reform, the beneficent effects of this vast change of sentiment have already begun to make their appearance ; and among the most potent factors in producing this great change must be classed the eloquent and enthusiastic apostles of socialism, whose work we shall attempt briefly to describe.

There is perhaps no term in the whole vocabulary more abused than the word socialism—a term in the minds of some tantamount to organized revolution and fraught with the direst possibilities of violence. But the underlying idea of the word is in itself harmless. Socialism is the opposite of individualism; and in this wider sense we are all more or less socialists. The mainsprings of all human action are of a twofold character; and we find in every individual impulses or forces which tend to weld society together, to render the idea of self subservient to that of the common weal. True socialism simply demands a wider scope for the play of this public spirit, a fuller appreciation of the importance of this common moral element which underlies all collective action. To confound it with communism involves a crass misconception; to identify it with revolution is no less serious an error. A scientific nomenclature ought to distinguish between socialism and social-democracy or collectivism. The former demands economic and social reform; the latter advocates political disturbance and revolutionary propaganda to effect its ends. The one is pacific and orderly, simply laying stress on the development of those ideas which render harmonious coëxistence in society possible. The other is essentially political in its aspirations; its formidable weapons are those of incitement to violence and invitation to crime; its object is the assumption of all the means of production by governmental machinery. The line of demarcation between the two is often irregular and unclear; but socialism proper, as a principle of human action, connotes neither violence nor anarchy, and does not necessarily imply the realization of its ideal through the agency of governmental interference. English socialism has in fact (until recently) been neither anarchic, political, nor disruptive; and in so far as it has remained untinged by the infiltration of continental ideas, it has been peaceable, deprecating all endeavors to excite fiery opposition among the masses, and has expressly disavowed faith in state aid as a universal panacea.

Socialistic and communistic ideals are not exclusively products of modern times. At all epochs and in all nations the

souls of noble men have been stirred to righteous indignation at the sight of so much oppression and perhaps undeserved misery among their fellow-beings, and propositions to effect a regeneration of society have never been lacking. Nothing can be more erroneous than to represent the social reformer as a bugbear, to depict him as a hypocrite devoid of all true sympathy with humanity, and concealing his own selfish designs under the mask of good will to all. There are, indeed, and always have been, demagogues who work upon the dissatisfaction of the masses and attempt at all costs to achieve their own preferment by using the weapons of popular agitation; but it cannot be denied that many great leaders in the movement for social reform during this century have been men of the purest motives and the most spotless lives. At the same time, a more thorough knowledge of economic history would convince many of our modern social therapeutists that their so-called great discoveries are mere restatements of ideas hoary with the age of centuries, and that their schemes of a reconstruction of the universe are perhaps as far removed from a speedy realization as those of their many predecessors.

England, too, has had her social reformers and agitators before this century. I need only mention Wat Tyler, John Ball, Jack Cade, Robert Kett, and, at the close of the last century, the agrarian communist, Thomas Spence. But these were all men who formed no new systems, and exerted no commanding influence in shaping the course of future ideas. It was reserved for the nineteenth century to witness the social reforms of Owen, the Chartists, the Sacred Socialists, the Anti-Corn-Law leaguers, the Christian Socialists, and, finally, the agitators of to-day. Among these, the work of Cobden and Bright, who were anything but socialists, has been repeatedly described; that of Owen has been partly misunderstood; and that of the others is all but unknown, or at least inadequately appreciated. During the second quarter of this century, moreover, we find a numerous school of economists, hitherto entirely neglected, who manfully battled against the prevalent tendencies, and who may fairly be termed socialists. The history of

English socialism presents, in fact, a scarcely trodden field for the investigator,¹ a completely forgotten side of national development; and yet the whole civilized world is to-day swayed by ideas for which we must in great part thank the English socialists. I propose, in this paper, to say a few words about Owen, and to give a sketch of Christian Socialism, reserving for future examination the remaining phases of English socialism.

The name of Robert Owen will ever be connected with the village of New Lanark, a little spot on the Clyde, where the celebrated Arkwright had in 1784 erected one of the earliest cotton spinneries in Scotland. Owen tells us, in his autobiography, with what enormous difficulties he had to cope, when he finally purchased the property in 1799. The position of the workers there, as in all the factories of the period, was most pitiable. Women and children of the most tender age were employed under conditions which debased both mind and morals, which turned them into stunted cripples and incurable criminals; drunkenness and ignorance, filth and immorality, were the characteristics of a population which viewed the efforts to inaugurate a new system with mistrust and suspicion. Owen, with his belief in the omnipotent effect of circumstance in moulding character, was naturally averse to all systems of punishment, preferring the preventive to the positive checks in his treatment of crime and disorder. A long experience as manufacturer had taught him that sudden changes were injudicious, and would defeat their own objects; and he therefore proceeded cautiously in his improvements. Drunkenness was discountenanced by the introduction of resorts where the workmen could find both pleasure and profit; immorality was checked by informal lectures setting forth its practical evils, as well as by various ingenious contrivances calculated to appeal to the honor of the operatives; the employment of young children was discontinued; the homes of the people were materially improved; good, honest provisions were supplied at cost price; children's

¹ Janzhul, *Angliskaya svobodnaya trgovlya*, vol. ii. ch. 3, gives the best, although still incomplete, account of English social movements.

schools were started, and insurance funds against old age and illness were not forgotten. Owen himself was governor of this patriarchal society, and to him all disputes were relegated for ultimate arbitration—a function he exercised so satisfactorily that quarrels decreased with amazing rapidity. His career at New Lanark was the most fruitful and beneficent epoch in an eventful life, and for many years he centred his attention on the necessary and the possible. Unhampered by lack of means, untrammelled as yet by the consuming desire to regenerate the world which was afterwards to turn him into a visionary schemer and a sterile agitator, he confined all his endeavors to the mill. The fame of the infant school, or New Institution, spread far and wide, until celebrities from all parts of the world were counted in the unceasing flow of visitors.

In 1812 Owen began to divulge his theories to the public. The underlying thought of his philosophy, the idea that repeatedly recurs in all his writings, is, that man's character is formed *for* not *by* him. "The general bodily and mental differences are solely the effects of education; man becomes a wild, ferocious savage, a cannibal, or a highly civilized and benevolent being, according to the circumstances in which he may be placed from his birth."¹ He ascribed all human misery to absolute ignorance of this vital principle, and in the *New View of Society* he calls the notion that individuals form their own character, "the enemy of humanity, the hydra of human calamity."² The will of man has no power whatever over his opinions, and only a complete reversal of all educational methods would succeed in changing the face of the universe and the destiny of nations. This apotheosis of circumstances naturally led Owen to the extreme conclusion that individual man is absolutely irresponsible for his conduct or character, since they are formed for him by society. Such always remained the substratum of Owen's teachings; and yet his practical and immediate propositions to the government were, with one exception, of a very modest kind, many of them having been actually car-

¹ Speech of 1812 at Glasgow; *Four Essays*, I., p. 14.

² *Essay IV.*, p. 125; *Essay II.*, p. 57; *Essay III.*, p. 99.

ried out to-day. He was, however, no economist ; and, like too many enthusiasts who proclaim far and wide their novel solution of a problem whose first conditions they have only insufficiently studied, generally came to grief in the attempt to put his later theories into practice. Already in his earliest writings he proposes that the government prepare a reserve of employment for the surplus laborers, "the price of public labor never falling below the means of temperate existence."¹ In this we see foreshadowed the celebrated doctrine of *droit au travail* which played an important role in the Revolution of 1848, and which contains a principle rather perilous to the perpetuation of the state.

With this exception Owen did not invoke undue state intervention, or ascribe to the government more extended functions than it everywhere possesses to-day. His position during the New Lanark career was, therefore, simply that of a reformer, not of a socialist ; and his efforts were mainly directed to the abolition of certain laws which he regarded as in the highest degree detrimental. He appeals to the individuals themselves, and in an eloquent preface addresses the superintendents of factories, pleading the cause of the living machinery, hitherto so neglected.² But while doing his utmost to bring the merits of the system to the cognizance of manufacturers and educators, he was careful to abstain from appealing to the passions of the mob. His gentle and almost childlike nature, his faith in humanity and in the absolute truth of his own remedy, made him timorous of any interference by the working classes themselves. In fact, since the entire character of a generation is, according to Owen, solely dependent on the circumstances to which it is subjected, to take the governing classes to task would be as irrational as to punish the malefactor for crimes committed by his predecessor or neighbor. There was, indeed, no room for violence in Owen's philosophy. The importance of his naive but large-hearted confidence in self cannot be overestimated, for had he in the days of his prodigious influence cast his lot with the party agitators in kindling class hatred, the disaffection of the artisans, foreboding enough at the time, might have been

¹ Essay IV., p. 169.

² Essay III., p. 68.

dangerously increased. "To do good to all men, to explain what is true, not to attack what is false," is the self-expressed object of his writings at this period. He was didactic, not revolutionary.

In all this philosophy there is a germ of truth. The importance of environment as a factor in change, both physical and moral, is a platitude which needs no justification, and has found a reformulation in the modern theory of evolution. But to magnify this principle into the one sole cause of all transformation, and to deny the existence of moral responsibility, is to abdicate for man the sense of his own individuality and to adopt a sad theory of fatalism — is in fact to confound virtue and vice by removing all consciousness of accountability for either. Owen failed to perceive this; his glorification of circumstance is an absurd exaggeration of a partially correct idea; his fond belief in the immediate acceptance of its complete truth was a result of his childlike and trusting enthusiasm. For some years, indeed, he continued his endeavors to effect practical reforms; and, after a meeting of cotton manufacturers in 1815, began an agitation for a factory law which should curtail the hours of work, prohibit infant labor, and afford a sufficient protection to the health and education of the operatives. Notwithstanding the opposition of the employers and the doleful predictions of the orthodox economists who foresaw the ruin of English industry by this unheard of violation of *laissez faire*, the bill finally became a law in 1819 — the precursor of many reforms which have totally changed the condition of the English workman. For this, if for nothing else, Owen is deserving of the highest praise and gratitude.

But he was now no longer content with these exploits. In 1817 he outlined the plans, before only vaguely hinted at, of the Agricultural and Manufacturing Villages of Unity and Mutual Co-operation.¹ This was a most important step, the turning point in his career and the virtual beginning of English social-

¹ Report to the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Laboring Poor, pp. 11-24. The ideas are in part taken from a tract of John Bellers: *Proposals for raising a Colledge of Industry*, 1696.

ism. Every one was to work for the benefit of all; the meals were to be cooked and eaten in common; dormitories in the shape of parallelograms were to be erected; and the details of government regulated in the most minute manner. Owen became a fanatic in the prosecution of his new ideal, considering himself the most popular man in the kingdom, and influenced by the lavish attention heaped on him from all quarters. But at this juncture his violent attack on all religions¹ alienated the affections of many influential adherents — and it must be said that he showed a narrow-mindedness as great as that which he ascribed to his opponents. The change in his career was, however, the result not so much of his religious as of his socialistic views. Owen was now a world regenerator, an extremist, a socialistic idealist, whose confident anticipation of a millennium seemed to increase in inverse ratio to the failure of his practical schemes.² To enter into the details of his communities would be tedious. The short-lived experiments of Motherwell and Orbiston in Scotland, of New Harmony in Indiana, are well known; but Owen, nothing daunted, made a triumphal visit to America in 1829, being greeted with universal acclamation, as on the continent ten years before. He had almost completed negotiations with the Mexican government for the grant of an immense tract on which to attempt his experiment on a large scale — the President had signified his adherence to the scheme — when suddenly with the fall of the liberal government all the bright prospects again vanished.

In this second period of Owen's activity there were two practical results: co-operation and socialism. Owen was the founder of the co-operative movement in England — a fact often ignored by those who glibly use the word to-day with an utter failure to discern its true significance. "The secret is out," says Owen; "it is unrestrained co-operation on the part of all, for every purpose of human life."³ Co-operation then simply meant associa-

¹ Address at City of London Tavern, Aug. 21, 1817, p. 58. Also, *Tracts relative to a New View of Society*, IV., p. 77.

² *Cf.* Memorial to Allied Powers at Aix-la-Chapelle, p. 15.

³ *The Economist*, Aug. 27, 1821.

tion, a pacific communism as outlined in the propositions for the model villages. He did not have in view any such petty contrivances as the co-operative stores where provisions are sold, or even co-operative workshops where the capitalist employer should be eliminated; his conception was far more ambitious, and embraced such comprehensive measures as would render mankind ignorant of discord, desirous only of universal felicity. In 1830 the movement was in full blast, with over five hundred associations and numerous newspapers devoted to the cause. Owen took the matter energetically in hand, for the societies were all more or less tinctured with his peculiar views, and he looked forward to the period when they would be enabled to realize his aspirations in all particulars. "But," said he, "let it be universally understood that the grand ultimate object of all co-operative associations, whether engaged in trading, manufacturing, or agricultural pursuits, is community in land."¹ Annual congresses were held, and the grave English reviews treated the movement as a portentous fact, fraught with enormous possibilities. Everybody talked co-operation, and, as to-day, few really understood it. And although these far-reaching endeavors proved to be visionary, although the practical experiments all resulted in failure, Owen nevertheless initiated a movement destined, in a coming decade, to produce important results; and his enthusiasm gave to that movement an impulse the force of which is not yet spent.

The second great result of Owen's activity was the spread of socialism, which was to a great extent comprehended in the co-operative movement. In the *Outline of the Rational System* the whole theory is repeated in aphoristic paragraphs, and "useless private property" is discarded.² But it must not be supposed that this socialism in its extreme form, this virtual communism, had anything in common with the revolutionary plans of a Babœuf. Such insinuations were indignantly repelled.³ Owen continued to preach moderation to the work-

¹ *The Crisis*, vol. i., p. 23, May 5, 1832. ² *The Crisis*, vol. i., no. 9, May 26, 1832.

³ "We wish equality, it is true, but it is voluntary equality; we are levellers, but we wish to level up, not down. . . . We have no desire to touch one particle of the wealth now existing." William Pare at Congress of 1832. *The Crisis*, April 28, 1832.

men ; he was an apostle of love, peace and charity, not of envy and discord ; and the motto of his principal journal read : " If we cannot yet reconcile all opinions, let us now endeavor to unite all hearts." His theory of labor is especially interesting, as it forms the basis of all German socialism at the present day. Although failing to draw the logical conclusions of Marx, Owen did not shrink from a practical application of his doctrine that " the natural standard of value is, in principle, human labor." Believing money to be the root of all evil, he inaugurated the Equitable Banks of Exchange, where property of all kinds was received and exchanged on the principle of " labor for equal value of labor," through the medium of labor-notes.¹ It was not long, of course, before the labor-bazaar ended in dismal failure, proving already at that time the untenableness of the later theories of Rodbertus on the *normaler Arbeitstag* with its proposed labor-money, as well as the *banque d'échange* of Proudhon. To maintain that labor is the source of value is inexact and misleading ; to set up fixed quantities of labor as the measure of value is absolutely absurd. How can the labor of a hod-carrier and of a prima donna be reduced to the same dimensions and valued according to the time employed, according to the average 6*d.* per hour of Owen, or the " labor-jelly " of the Germans ? Who and what is to determine the proportion of this average labor in a bushel of wheat, and in a palace containing rare works of art ? In Owen's bank a self-appointed council undertook the task, but with the most lamentable results, not because of any lack of discernment, but simply on account of the utter impracticability of the scheme. " Labor " becomes an unmeaning abstraction when the exertions of a scavenger and the lucubrations of a philosopher are jumbled together into one category, payable at the same rate per hour.

After this inglorious attempt, Owen's interest in co-operation gradually vanished, his energy being henceforth centred on the propagation of his all-embracing socialistic schemes. Repeated addresses were issued, numerous associations formed, while the most bizarre ideas were proposed, such as the floating co-opera-

¹ For their form, see *The Crisis*, vol. i., p. 61.

tive community on the Thames.¹ After an unsuccessful attempt to win over the trades-unions, at whose first large congress he presided, Owen evidently entered on his dotage. As Bentham says: "He begins in vapor and ends in smoke."² In 1850 he called the world a great lunatic asylum, but was still full of confidence in his panacea; shortly after, he absolutely denied the right of property, and became an ardent spiritualist; and in his last year the old man showed the persistence of his convictions by addressing an open letter to the potentates of the earth, and by writing an autobiography full of youthful enthusiasm.

Owen was thus a visionary, like St. Simon and Fourier; but, unlike them, he had a most beneficent effect on the social progress of his country. His economic doctrines were crude and often absurd; his theory of marriage was, to say the least, peculiar; his socialistic views were utopian: but he succeeded in proving that a factory could be made to benefit both master and workman; he initiated the reform in the condition of the laboring classes; he laid the firm foundation on which the co-operative movement of our times is erecting its successful edifice. England must thank him, above all, for his success in preventing socialism from consolidating with Chartism—a movement different from the superficially analogous cases on the continent. The French Revolution was perhaps more a social than a political cataclysm; and even to Morelly and Mably a political renaissance was only the first step to social regeneration. But with the Chartists, although the excitement was largely fostered by the sad economic condition of the laborers, the direct aims were purely political, and, if the truth be told, to a great extent innocent. Had Owen been of a less pacific nature, had he been willing to make use of the weapons of political discontent to reach his ends, had he, in other words, brought the socialists into coalition with the Chartists, the movement might have attained far more threatening propor-

¹ *The New Moral World*, Nov. 1834. Among Owen's societies were the Association of All Classes of All Nations, the National Community Friendly Society, the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists. All published reports.

² *Collected Works*, Bowring's ed., X., 570.

tions. But Owen deprecated all violence, and placed no reliance on the Chartist ideal. He desired reform, but it was voluntary, not compulsory reform. His kind heart and unquenchable confidence taught him to seek a change only through peace, love and education; his socialism was not destructive, but constructive; his activity engendered neither unrest nor disaffection.

So much for the first phase of English socialism. More interesting, although more short-lived, was another phase, that of Christian Socialism—a movement called forth by the desperate state of the working classes toward the middle of this century. From the rise of the factory system down to the repeal of the corn laws, the condition of the artisans had been going from bad to worse, until their suffering, their inhuman treatment, their abject destitution, almost beggared description.¹ It is difficult for us of the present day to form a conception of the listless indifference of the upper classes and the inattention of professed economists in regard to the subject. The Christian Socialist movement arose as a protest against this indifference and the utterly negative standpoint of the scientists. Its two chief expounders were ministers of the Church of England, those noble-souled men, Maurice and Kingsley.

Frederick Denison Maurice, born in 1805, took an active part, from his earliest years, in the benevolent schemes of his father, a Unitarian minister; and the early familiarity with vice and destitution he thus acquired doubtless laid the foundation for future sympathy with all suffering. He was one of nature's true noblemen. Professor, theologian, historian, philosopher, he was conspicuous in each character; and it is doubtful which should be more admired, his intellectual eminence or his moral earnestness. His humility of character, his modesty and distrust of self, the sympathetic aid he so freely accorded to all searchers and strugglers, his uncompromising antagonism to every form

¹ Cf. the Parliamentary Reports, especially of 1816, 1824, 1834, 1843; Faucher, *Études sur l'Angleterre*, I., 360-536; Engel, *Lage der arbeitenden Klassen Englands*; and for a good pen-picture, Thomas Cooper, *Autobiography*, ch. 13.

of insincerity and evasion, coupled with a rare eloquence and a subtle power of moulding men's thoughts, endeared him to all, whether friends or acquaintances. With a nature thoroughly steeped in religion, he firmly believed in the ethical basis of Christianity, and was, perhaps, more deeply imbued with the teachings of its founder than any of his contemporaries.¹ Impatient of petty differences of doctrine, he longed for one universal true church which should gather all mankind to its fold, which should exorcise all intolerance and injustice. His whole life was devoted to the diffusion and application of this broad conception of religion, and some of the most emphatic of his earlier writings were directed against the famous Oxford or Tractarian movement, which, under the leadership of such men as Pusey, Keble and Newman, was rehabilitating scholasticism and championing the cause of ritualism. His views on social questions were the natural outcome of his fundamental religious ideas, and he firmly believed that political economy was not the foundation of morals and politics, but "must have them for its foundation or be worth nothing."²

Already as a young man he had joined a debating club which had grown out of an Owenite society, and where the subject of co-operation often came up for discussion. But he had no sympathy with Owen's fundamental thought. Referring to some remarkable and edifying inconsistencies in the speakers at a conference, Maurice tells us that he never heard stronger testimony to the power of the will to regulate and command circumstances than came from these socialistic worshippers of circumstances.³ There was, indeed, little in common between the two men: Owen, a rich, benevolent manufacturer, devoid of any scientific training, a staunch rationalist, and forever harping on the one exaggerated principle which was to produce a new society; Maurice, a deeply religious mind, equipped with all the culture of the generation, and although no profound student

¹ Cf. the masterly characterizations in Huber, *Reisebriefe*, II., 16; Br ntano, Schmöller's *Jahrbücher*, VII., 744. Cf. Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 22, part iii., p. 311 (ed. of 1881).

² *Life of F. D. Maurice*, I., 210.

³ Letter to Ludlow, Aug. 13, 1849.

of economics, yet able to separate the chaff from the wheat. Owen was, in fact, a state communist. Maurice said expressly : "The state cannot be communist, never will be, never ought to be."¹ The true state he considered eminently conservative of individual rights and property, the abolition of which would only create dire confusion. But the church, he held, was communistic in principle ; the church brought into human society a spiritual fellowship and co-operation, without which the state would soon degenerate into a mere stock-exchange.

In 1846, while professor at King's College and chaplain of Lincoln's Inn, he was solicited by a young lawyer, John Malcolm Ludlow, to aid in a scheme for bringing the leisure and good feeling of the Inns of Court to bear upon the misery of the neighborhood. As a result, a close intimacy sprang up between the two men—an intimacy productive of important results ; for Ludlow was soon to become a most ardent and energetic upholder of the new movement, and to supply practical plans for the realization of Maurice's lofty views.

The other great leader in the movement was Charles Kingsley, a young pastor at Eversley, by fourteen years Maurice's junior, and powerfully affected by the theological views of his friend, although their personal acquaintance dated back only to 1844. The two men were radically different in temperament. Maurice was mild, unobtrusive, averse to undue opposition, convincing by his example and his earnest logic rather than by appeals to the feelings. Kingsley was ardent, aggressive and enthusiastic, touching the heart rather than the head. Maurice had a deep, measured style ; Kingsley wrote as he spoke, with sentences fervid, passionate, clear-cut. Both were men of transcendent ability, but Maurice was incomparably the superior in thoroughness of conviction, in repose of intellect, in talent for leadership. And yet, while differing in these details of character, they possessed practically coincident views as to the nature and office of religion. An acquaintance with these views is indispensable to a just understanding of their social philosophy.

¹ Life of F. D. Maurice, II., 9.

According to them the world is a manifestation of God's order, but the selfishness of man has produced a deviation from the original principles. "God's order seems to me more than ever the antagonist of man's systems," writes Maurice to a friend.¹ Far from egotism being the controlling motive of human existence, all that is good in the modern world has come from the principles of self-sacrifice and fraternal co-operation as outlined in Christian ethics. The reintroduction of an universal practical Christianity in the noblest, widest sense of the word, can alone check the downward tendency and engender a pure and peaceful harmony of interests. The religion they strove to realize was that of the founder; their conception was a broad, human one. Vehemently opposing Calvinism and asceticism as removing mankind from a sense of its obligations in this world, asserting the moral impotence of the view which makes the hope of heaven or the fear of hell the sole determinants of human conduct, objecting equally to the Oxford Tractarianism, which they termed an aristocratic movement in the most carnal sense, "a system for saving the souls of fine ladies and gentlemen in an easy and gentlemanlike way"²—they were reformers in the fullest sense of the word. The kingdom of Christ was to them no empty formula; they were thoroughly imbued with the belief that this kingdom, created through revelation, actually existed and was destined in time to subjugate all wickedness and misery. Society, according to them, is not to be made anew by arrangements, but is to be regenerated by "finding the law and ground of its order and harmony, the only secret of its existence, in God."³ In speaking of the term Christian Socialism, they denied having adopted the word Christian merely as a qualifying adjective; they maintained that Christianity has the power of regenerating whatever it comes in contact with, of making that morally healthful which apart from it must be either mischievous or inefficient.⁴

¹ Maurice, *Life*, II., 44.

² Kingsley, *Letters and Memories of his Life*, II., 250.

³ Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*, *passim*; *Life*, II., 137.

⁴ Maurice, *Life*, II., 92.

This was the keynote of the whole movement — the ethical force of Christianity as the leaven of social reform. “Whatever doubt or doctrinal atheism you and your friends may have,” wrote Kingsley, “don’t fall into moral atheism. Don’t forget the eternal goodness, whatever name you call it. I call it God.”¹ The Christian Socialists looked with consternation upon the growing cleft between rich and poor, upon the cynical indifference of the one class, and the brooding discontent of the other; they sternly took the clergy to task for their supine inactivity, for squandering time in doctrinal quibbles and neglecting the paramount issues of the time. They strongly protested against the notion of turning the Bible into a book for keeping the poor in order. The Bible they considered, on the contrary, the poor man’s book, the voice of God against tyrants, idlers and humbugs. It demands for the poor as much and more than they demand for themselves; it expresses the deepest yearnings of the poor man’s heart far more nobly, more searchingly, more daringly, more eloquently, than any modern orator has done. “Justice from God to those whom men oppress, glory from God to those whom men despise” is the thought which runs through the whole Bible. It is the poor man’s comfort and the rich man’s warning.²

This explains in part their name Christian Socialists. But, it will be asked, were they socialists at all, had they anything in common with socialism? Only in the wider sense, we answer. If by socialism we mean that system which, instead of saying “all mine is thine,” says “all thine is mine,” which is filled with envy and resentment, and preaches indiscriminate violence, which calls on the state as the sole solvent of social unhappiness and the sole regulator of economic relations, then they were indeed not socialists. But if by socialism we mean that principle which looks upon all human beings as members of one family and subject to one law, which regards the workingmen as endued with the same possibilities and worthy of the same

¹ Kingsley, Letters, II., 75.

² *Politics for the People*, May 21, 1848. Letter to the Chartists, by Kingsley. Cf. Maurice, Letter to Kingsley, April 22, 1848.

opportunities as others, which sets up the idea of combination and universal co-operation in opposition to the anarchy of disunion and the shortcomings of competition, which, in short, seeks to develop those characteristics that bind mankind together and render them more conscious of reciprocal duties — then in this wider sense, they were indeed the truest socialists of the century. “I must have socialism, or rather humanity,” writes Maurice, “recognized as a necessary element and condition of organic society.” Their object was to separate that socialism which Southey and other conservatives believed to be the best solution of England’s practical difficulties, from communism, red republicanism, or any anarchical opinion whatsoever, and to infuse into it the purest ethical teachings.¹

We can readily understand that men of such a stamp should view with a sovereign disdain the social doctrines of the Manchester school of political economy. “Of all narrow, conceited, hypocritical, anarchic and atheistic schemes of the universe, the Cobden and Bright one is exactly the worst.”² To the Christian Socialists a Manchester ascendancy seemed a horrible catastrophe, and it cannot be denied that there were some reasons for their dread. When men like Senior, McCulloch and James Mill pushed the doctrine of self-interest to its ultimate logical issues, dogmatically asserted the immutability of supposed laws, frowned down all efforts of trades-unions to elevate their class, fought the endeavors of Parliament to curtail the abuses of the factory owners, and sheltered themselves under the wide mantle of absolute *laissez faire*; when the Anti-Corn-Law league was joined by the large manufacturers who ostensibly advocated cheaper bread for the operatives, but in reality hoped for lower wages and the crushing of the landed interest; when the utmost possible production of commodities was the *beau idéal*, and man as such utterly thrust into the

¹ Maurice, Letter to Dr. Jelf, Dec. 20, 1851. Cf. Kingsley, Letters, I., 248. “We are teaching the workmen true socialism, true liberty, brotherhood and equality — not the carnal dead level equality of the communist, but the spiritual equality of the church idea, which gives every man an equal chance of developing, and rewards every man according to his work.”

² Letter of Kingsley, cf. Hughes, Prefatory Memoir to Alton Locke, p. 51.

background — then the epithet “the dismal science,” or *la science du néant*, as applied to economics seemed almost justified. A century hence, thought Kingsley, mankind will be looking back upon the social philosophy of the present day, as they do upon the witch manias of our forefathers.¹ The Christian Socialists, however, did not object to political economy as such. Kingsley expressly stated that he did not join in the vulgar outcry against economics in general, as absurd and inhuman. He distinctly maintained that the future practical science must be built up more or less on the laws discovered by Adam Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, and that “to be a sound and scientific socialist, a man must first be a sound and scientific political economist.” He believed and said that political economy was all but the highest and most spiritual of sciences; the science of organizing politics, and of making men good citizens. But what he did object to, was the exaggeration and perversion of the half-truths of the earlier masters, which had become the entire stock in trade of superficial declaimers. For such men as John Stuart Mill, who believed that the last word in economics had not yet been said, and who were attempting to approach the labor question in a fair and unbiassed spirit, the Christian Socialists entertained the highest respect; and they professed their entire willingness to be silent in any purely economic point, “and let their betters speak.” But they strenuously protested against the doctrine and methods of the prevalent school, which formed, so to say, a distortion of economics, and, when confronted by accounts of most abject vice and misery, answered that political economy had nothing to do with the matter, and that, if the supply of labor was equal to the demand, no material laws were infringed. Said Kingsley :

I expect nothing from a public press which panders to popular Mammonism by scraps of politico-economic cant, and justifies the ignorant miser to himself by retailing Benthamite phrases which sound like scientific laws while they are really nothing but the assertion of barren truisms. I expect nothing from the advocates of *laissez faire* — the pedants whose glory is in the shame of society, who arrogantly talk of

¹ Letter to Bullar, Letters, II., 36.

economics as of a science so completely perfected, so universal and all-important that common humanity and morality, reason and religion must be pooh-poohed down, if they seem to interfere with its infallible conclusions, and yet revile, as absurd and utopian, the slightest attempt to apply those conclusions to any practical purpose. . . . The man who tells us that we ought to investigate Nature, simply to sit still patiently under her, and let her freeze, and ruin, and starve, and stink us to death, is a goose, whether he calls himself a chemist or a political economist.¹

But now to the story of their work. The beginning of the year 1848 marked a crisis in English history, a dark period for the English workman. The bad harvests, the window tax, the potato famine, and the Chartist agitation (which had been long drawing to a head) threatened to produce serious disorders; when suddenly the February revolution in Paris acted as a firebrand thrown into the camp of popular discontent. Ireland was on the verge of rebellion, and severe riots occurred in many of the larger English towns. Ludlow, who had been educated in France and was well acquainted with the work of Buchez, the father of French co-operation,² returned from a visit to Paris with the conviction that socialism had become a powerful factor in the national life. It must be Christianized, he writes to Maurice, or it will shake Christianity to its foundation, precisely because it appeals to the higher and not to the lower instincts of man.³ He even desired to throw in his lot with the Parisians by starting a paper called *La Fraternité Chrétienne*, but was dissuaded by the thought that there was an ample field for earnest work at home. The famous "five million" Chartist petition had been handed in, and the call issued for an immense mass-meeting at Kennington Common, April 10. London was thrown into a ferment of excitement, and put under the military government of Wellington. Two hundred thousand special constables were sworn in,

¹ Thoughts on the Frimley Murder, by Parson Lot. *The Christian Socialist*, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, 1850, vol. i., pp. 3, 18. Cf. Kingsley's criticism of the economists in *A Mad World, my Masters*; and in *New Miscellanies*, p. 6.

² For an account of his work, hitherto almost neglected, see Hubert-Valleroux, *Les Associations co-opératives, en France et à l'étranger*, 1884; and Engländer, *Geschichte der französischen Arbeiter-Associationen*, Bd. 2, Cap. 24.

³ Correspondence with Ludlow; Maurice, *Life*, I., 458 *et seq.*

but the cloud of discontent became more and more lowering. Kingsley rushed down from Eversley in a state of intense agitation, burning with sympathy for the men, but most apprehensive of the results. At Maurice's house he met Ludlow, and together they walked to the common, where the pouring rain and the energy of O'Connor prevented any outbreak. Quickly it was decided to publish placards and spread them broadcast, in order to allay the fevered minds of the malcontents. Kingsley wrote all night long, and on the morning of the twelfth his appeal to the workingmen of England appeared on thousands of posters.

Workmen of England, you say that you are wronged. Many of you are wronged, and many besides yourself know it. . . . You have more friends than you think for—friends who expect nothing from you, but who love you because you are their brothers, and, therefore, dare not neglect you. . . . You think that the Charter will make you free—would to God it would! The Charter is not bad if the men who use it are not bad. But will the Charter make you free? Will it free you from slavery to £10 bribes? Slavery to beer and gin? Slavery to every spouter who flatters your self-conceit, and stirs up bitterness and head-long rage in you? That, I guess, is real slavery—to be a slave to one's stomach, one's own pocket, one's own temper. Will the Charter cure that? Friends, you want more than acts of Parliament can give. Englishmen, Saxons, leaders of freedom for seven hundred years, men say you have common sense. Then do not humbug yourselves into meaning license when you cry for liberty. . . . Who would dare to refuse you freedom? But there will be no true freedom without virtue, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God, and love to your fellow-citizens. Workers of England, be wise, and then you *must* be free, for you will be *fit* to be free.¹

This, and much more in stirring language, was signed "A Working Parson" and produced an immense impression. The danger of serious violence passed away, but the uneasy, excitable feeling had by no means completely subsided. Maurice, and the little band of friends who had been in the habit of meeting at his house weekly for discussion of kindred topics, decided, at the suggestion of Ludlow, to start a penny weekly

¹ The placard, which lies before me, is reprinted in Kingsley's Letters, I., 156.

which should attempt to impress true ideas upon the people, and show them a way out of their difficulties. The list of writers for the *Politics for the People*, as it was called, was remarkable. In addition to Maurice, Kingsley and Ludlow, the chief contributors, we find articles by Archdeacon Hare, Professor Conington, Sir Arthur Helps, Archbishop Whately, Dr. Guy, French, Stanley, Osborn, and others equally noted in the literary world—a rare galaxy of brilliant minds. The columns moreover were opened to the Chartists themselves,¹ and contained many communications from their hands, among others one signed by “One of the wicked Chartists of Kennington Common.” The first number teemed with admirable essays, Maurice explaining the object in a strong article on true fraternity.² Those portions of the contents that perhaps gave rise to the greatest objurgations—for the writers were soon attacked on all sides by the periodical press—were the three letters to the Chartists from the pen of Kingsley under the pseudonym of Parson Lot.³ He confesses himself to be a radical reformer, but adds that his quarrel with the Charter is that it does not go far enough, and that it will certainly not give them what they want. He tells them that they have fallen into the mistake of supposing that legislative reform is social reform, and shows that the Charter cannot make the rogues honest or the idle industrious. He accuses them of trying to do God’s work with the devil’s tools, and asks what is the use of brilliant language about peace and the majesty of order and universal love when it “runs in the same team with ferocity, railing, mad, one-eyed excitement, talking itself into a passion like a street woman.” He refers them again and again to the Bible, as the true reformer’s guide, and pleads the cause of religion in glowing terms.⁴

¹ Cf. letters of Thomas Shorter, and Millbank.

² *Politics for the People*, no. 1, May 6, 1848.

³ At one of the weekly meetings mentioned above, Kingsley, whose logic was of a rather aggressive kind, happened to oppose all the others, and laughingly said that he felt much as Lot must have felt in the cities of the plain when he seemed “as one that mocked to his sons-in-law.” From that day he was nicknamed Parson Lot, and for years used no other signature. Cf. Hughes, Prefatory Memoir, p. 5.

⁴ *Politics for the People*, no. 2, p. 28; no. 4, p. 58.

Notwithstanding the admirable array of contributors, the paper was discontinued after seventeen numbers for lack of support, although it had attained a circulation of two thousand, and won many of the workmen over to its point of view — principally through the efforts of Walter Cooper, the Chartist tailor, who was soon to lend them considerable aid. Ludlow tells us that the editors, themselves victims of the fearful class estrangements which they came together to break down, did not at first know a single workingman who would read what they wrote. And yet when the paper ceased to exist, perhaps because of its failure, the lurking distrust of the workmen that the editors were actuated by some sinister designs was utterly removed, and many warm personal friendships had been formed. They failed, but with the words of hope upon their lips.¹

The friends, including Mansfield, Campbell, Furnival, Ellison, and Lord Goderich (afterwards governor-general of India under the name of Earl de Grey and Ripon), far from disbanding, continued the meetings at Maurice's house all winter, and under his guidance started night schools for workingmen and girls in the worst districts, such as Little Ormond Yard, visiting and teaching in person, often under the most adverse conditions, and taking the ragged boys on picnics to the country.² Their influence was already great. In the spring of 1849, Walter Cooper, who had been attending several of Maurice's sermons, encouraged the friends to hold public meetings for the workmen. The Chartists were accordingly invited to attend weekly conferences at Cranbourne tavern, where many an eloquent address was delivered under the presidency of Maurice, as guiding spirit. By this time, the now famous Thomas Hughes, who on being suddenly confronted with the squalor of London life had almost become a physical-force chartist, joined the

¹ "When it was seen that their attempt was really no rich man's conspiracy to coax or bully the workingmen out of their rights or out of their hopes, but the sincere endeavor of a few men to see and speak the truth, then indeed their true success began, in the regret manifested by many workmen." Cf. the eloquent retrospect of Ludlow in *The Christian Socialist*, no. 10, Jan. 4, 1851, vol. i. p. 73.

² For an account of the work, and the joy of the ragged urchins, see article by Furnival in *The Working Man's College Magazine*, II., 144 (September, 1860).

movement and became one of its ardent apostles.¹ Shorter, Ebenezer Elliott, and other Chartist leaders were regular attendants, and it was at one of these conferences that Kingsley made his celebrated speech beginning, "I am a Church of England parson and a Chartist," in which he acknowledged the grievous wrongs of the workmen but dissuaded them from violence.²

At this juncture a series of letters by Mr. Mayhew on London labor and the London poor appeared in one of the daily papers. These letters — especially those on the condition of the working tailors³ — disclosed a depth of misery hitherto deemed inconceivable. There were, as appeared from the testimony of the workmen themselves at two crowded meetings called by the metropolitan commissioner, two distinct classes of shops among the tailors: the honorable trade in the West End, comprising a few shops where the workmen were employed on the premises; and the dishonorable trade of the show or slop-shops, which comprised about five-sixths of the whole number, and employed over 21,000 workmen. At these slop-shops with their meretricious fronts and plate-glass windows, the lowest possible wages were paid, but not to the tailors themselves. The work was entirely let out to contractors or "sweaters," as they were expressively called, and by them again to a second, third, or fourth sweater, who finally engaged to find the workmen; and it can readily be imagined how small a pittance was left after the repeated deductions of the sweaters' profits. But this was not the worst. As all the work was piece work, the sweaters insisted on the attendance of more tailors than the supply of

¹ Maurice tells an amusing story of the remarks made by some of the members when Hughes' name was suggested: "Oh, you will get no good from that quarter; he will be no good for teaching; a very good fellow for cricket and that sort of thing." *Life*, I., 483. The author of *Tom Brown's School Days* soon disclosed other characteristics.

² Hughes, *Prefatory Memoir*, p. 16. There are a few anachronisms in this memoir. The date on p. 16, *e.g.*, should be 1849, not 1848, as appears from Kingsley, *Letters*, I., 205.

³ *The Morning Chronicle*, Dec. 14, 1849. In the large work of Henry Mayhew, *London Labor and the London Poor*, 3 vols., London, 1861, many interesting facts are collected.

work warranted, claiming that there was no telling when a new order would come in. The miserable laborers were thus compelled to go half the time without any work at all, and to take their meals and often reside in the sweater's house. From that moment they were doomed. The pittance they received was soon swallowed up by a series of systematic exactions. Outrageous prices were demanded for the most filthy and insufficient food, the rent was extortionate, and all manner of petty fines were imposed, so that the poor wretches instead of earning a penny continually fell behind. They were literally stripped of everything, until it was common for half a dozen men to have only one coat between them — the so-called "reliever" — permitting only one to go out at a time. But the condition of most was still more horrible. As they fell into arrears they were cooped up, six and ten at a time, in a miserable dark hole which served both as work and bed room, and in this fetid, reeking atmosphere, half-stifed and half-starved, they were consigned to a perpetual imprisonment, to a real and lasting slavery. Emaciated, diseased, and starved, thousands of these poor wretches endured a living death, the horrors of which are indescribable and which were only faintly portrayed in the testimony of the tailors themselves. Even the government was much to blame, for it practised the contract system to a large extent, and thus directly contributed to the continuation of this revolting state of affairs, while the slop-shops were patronized by the finest noblemen and even by the clergy.

Kingsley's soul was stirred to its utmost depth by these harrowing revelations, and in a storm of indignation he wrote that famous pamphlet, *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*,¹ which begins in this wise :

King Ryence, says the legend of Prince Arthur, wore a paletot trimmed with kings' beards. In the first French revolution (so Carlyle assures us) there were at Meudon tanneries of human skins. Mammon, at once tyrant and revolutionary, follows both these noble examples — in a more respectable way doubtless, for Mammon hates cruelty. . . .

¹ Reprinted as no. 5 of Tracts by Christian Socialists, and again in Eversley's edition of Alton Locke (1881), pp. 76-109.

So he shrieks benevolently when a drunken soldier is flogged, but he trims his paletot and adorns his legs with the flesh of men and the skins of women, with degradation, pestilence, heathendom and despair; and then chuckles complacently over the smallness of his tailor's bills. Hypocrite! straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. What is flogging or hanging, King Ryence's paletot or the tanneries of Meudon, to the slavery, starvation, waste of life, year-long imprisonment in dungeons narrower and fouler than those of the Inquisition, which goes on among thousands of free English clothes-makers at this day?

And then he proceeds to describe the situation in all its horrors, and to take the government and the wealthy to task for permitting such a thing to exist. In all literature I know nothing to be compared with this soul-stirring pamphlet, unless it be the burning words of *Les paroles d'un croyant*, by De Lamennais. Kingsley's essay as well as an article by Ludlow in *Fraser's Magazine*,¹ in which a similar state of affairs was shown to exist among the working girls, created intense excitement, and all kinds of palliatives were put forth. Sydney Herbert and Ashley wrote letters proposing emigration as the only remedy, but were answered by Lord Mansfield, one of the little band of trusty friends who now resolved to take a determined stand. Ludlow, who had been in Paris and witnessed the situation of the *associations ouvrières*, returned with an enthusiasm for the co-operative workshops, and found no difficulty in winning Maurice over to his views, thus gaining for himself the credit of initiating the practical movement. A dinner had been given at Ludlow's in December, 1849, at which the plan was formulated. It was decided to issue a number of pamphlets,² and it was then that the

¹ Jan. 1850, *Labor and the Poor*, reprinted as nos. 3 and 4 of Tracts by Christian Socialists (a series which followed the Tracts on Christian Socialism). Cf. p. 6 for the affecting testimony of the young girls driven into prostitution through want.

² The following were the Tracts on Christian Socialism:

No. 1. Dialogue between Somebody (a person of respectability) and Nobody (the writer).

No. 2. History of the Working Tailors' Association.

No. 3. What Christian Socialism has to do with the Question at present agitating the Church.

No. 4. The Working Associations of Paris.

No. 5. The Society for promoting Workingmen's Associations.

name Christian Socialism was adopted. "That is the only title which will define our object and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists."¹ And yet it was not without some misgivings. Vansittart Neale, then a young man, and to-day still the soul of the co-operative movement in England, expressed his dislike of the name as tending to alienate many would-be supporters, but the objection, although doubtless well founded, was overruled.²

Maurice wrote the first tract, in which he asserts that any one who recognizes the principles of co-operation as stronger and truer than those of competition, is justly called a socialist, and admits that the adherents of Owen, Fourier, Louis Blanc, *etc.*, fall within this definition. In later tracts he completely refutes Owen's views of circumstances, and discusses the relation between socialism and the church. Thousands of copies were struck off and widely distributed. But mere words were not enough. A few hundred pounds were raised, the friends rented a house in Great Castle Street, took a mortgage on the premises, and the Working Tailors' Association was started, with twelve tailors, under the leadership of Walter Cooper, the ex-Chartist. All moneys loaned were to be repaid into a fund to enable other societies to spring into existence. Wages were proportioned according to work and talents, but the profits were equally divided, provided that each man did his utmost, the ultimate decision being placed in the hands of the workmen themselves.³ Men of other trades saw that here was a way out of their difficulties, and applied for similar aid; and as a result, the Society

No. 6. Prevailing Idolatries or Hints for Political Economists.

No. 7. A Dialogue between A and B, two clergymen, on the Doctrine of Circumstances, as it affects priests and people.

No. 8. A Clergyman's Answer to the Question, "On what grounds can you associate with men generally?"

Maurice wrote nos. 1, 3, 7, 8; Ludlow, nos. 4, 6; Hughes, no. 2.

¹ Life of Maurice, II., 34. The name had first been used in Owen's *New Moral World*, Nov. 7, 1840, in a letter signed, Joseph Squiers, Coventry. Several societies of Christian Co-operators had however existed in 1830.

² Cf. remarks in Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, II., 390.

³ Report of Committee . . . on savings of the middle and working classes, p. 56.

for promoting Workingmen's Associations¹ was established in February, 1850, the friends, together with a few workmen, forming the "council of promoters" which met weekly at Maurice's house. Soon other associations were started, until they reached the number of seventeen in London alone, while the movement spread to the provincial cities, until finally a central board was formed with delegates from all the societies, and not much later the central co-operative agency was inaugurated, a pioneer and forerunner of the wholesale society which to-day transacts an immense business with over one thousand associations throughout England.²

Thus for a second time socialism had identified itself with co-operation. But to the Christian Socialists co-operation was the quintessence of principles inculcated by the church, the destroyer of that competition which they regarded as an unhallowed warfare. "Competition," said Maurice, "is put forth as the law of the universe. That is a lie. The time is come to declare that it is a lie, by word and deed. I see no way but by associating for work instead of for strikes." Kingsley maintained that not self-interest, but self-sacrifice, was the only law upon which human society could be grounded with any hope of success. "That self-interest is a law of human nature, I know well. That it ought to be the root-law of human society, I deny, unless society is to sink down again into a Roman empire and a cage of wild beasts."³ The enthusiasm of the promoters was unbounded. Thomas Hughes thought (and still thinks to-day) that they had found the solution of the labor question; but at that time he was also convinced that "we had nothing to do but just to announce it and found an association or two, in order to convert all England and usher in the millennium at once, so plain did the whole thing seem."⁴ And the majority of the promoters were equally sanguine. Their success, indeed, was at first phenomenal. Kingsley had emphasized the fact

¹ In the tract defining its objects, it was prescribed that none of the associations should ever be made the instrument or agent of political agitation. This strikes the keynote of their policy. *Tracts on Christian Socialism*, no. 5.

² Ackland and Jones, *Workingmen Co-operators*, ch. 4.

³ *Letters*, II., 37.

⁴ *Memoir of a Brother*, p. III.

that it was by securing custom, far more than by gifts or loans of money, that the nobility could help the operatives;¹ and this indeed took place. The members of the original association soon tripled in number, and the outlook appeared most favorable. The laborers themselves were astonished to find that members of the upper classes sympathized with them; "the opinion has been that we are simply to be used as so many machines, and then to be thrown off when not needed, and that the other classes cared nothing about us."²

During the autumn of 1850, Walter Cooper had made two tours through the northern counties, diffusing the principles of productive co-operation. In January, Maurice, Hughes and Lees started out on a similar journey, and met with signal success, for the idea was eagerly adopted in many large towns — Manchester, Southampton, and others.³ The promoters, moreover, were astonished to find how many societies had preserved their existence from the Owenite epoch, and as a result of the impulse given by the Rochdale pioneers in 1844. Maurice was still the life of the movement, and every incipient society applied to the promoters for information and aid, although they often found it difficult to harmonize conflicting views and to extirpate the "dividing, godless, warring tendencies" in each heart. But they now experienced the necessity of some organ to voice their sentiments in a more continuous and permanent shape; and in the autumn of 1850, the publication of *The Christian Socialist*, a weekly under the editorship of Ludlow, was undertaken with about the same body of eminent contributors as its predecessor. In this most remarkable journal, the motives of the founders are most clearly expressed:

A new idea has gone abroad into the world. That Socialism, the latest-born of the forces now at work in modern society, and Christianity, the eldest-born of those forces, are in their nature not hostile, but akin to each other; or rather, that the one is but the development, the

¹ Cheap Clothes and Nasty, p. 107 of reprint.

² Report of the select committee, *etc.*, p. 54. Testimony of Walter Cooper.

³ Even in America the impulse was felt, and Associative Unions were started. Ludlow, *Labor and the Poor*, p. 16; *The Christian Socialist*, I., 45, *etc.*

outgrowth, the manifestation of the other. . . . That Christianity, however feeble and torpid it may seem to many just now, is truly but as an eagle at moult; that Socialism is but its livery of the nineteenth century, which it is even now putting on, to spread erelong its wings for a broader and heavenlier flight. That Socialism without Christianity, on the one hand, was lifeless as the feathers without the bird, however skillfully the stuffer may dress them up into an artificial semblance of life. That every socialist system which has maintained itself, has stood upon the moral grounds of righteousness, self-sacrifice, mutual affection, and common brotherhood. . . . That Christianity, on the other hand, in this nineteenth century of ours, becomes in its turn chilly and helpless when stripped of its social influences; or, in other words, when divorced from Socialism. . . . That if the Gospel speaks true, and "ye cannot serve God and Mammon," it is wholly incompatible with a political economy which proclaims self-interest to be the very pivot of social action; . . . but that it is compatible with those theories or systems which have for a common object to bind up into fellowship, and not to divide by selfishness and rivalry; to substitute fair prices and living wages for a false cheapness, and starvation, its child; and which have adopted for their watchwords *Association* and *Exchange* instead of *Competition* and *Profit*. . . . If it be given us to vindicate for Christianity its true authority over the realms of industry and trade, for Socialism its true character as the great Christian revolution of the nineteenth century, so that the title of Socialist shall be only a bugbear to the idle and to the wicked, and society from the highest rank to the lowest shall avowedly regulate itself upon the principle of co-operation, and not drift rudderless upon the sea of competition, as our let-alone political economists would have it do — then, indeed, we shall have achieved our task; and no amount of obloquy, ridicule, calumny, neglect, shall make us desert it, so long as we have strength and means to carry on the fight. For a fight it is; and a long one, and a deadly one — a fight against all the armies of Mammon.¹

Kingsley had previously written *The Saint's Tragedy*, in which he touched upon some weak features of the prevalent political economy,² as well as the novel *Yeast*, in which the misery

¹ The New Idea, by Ludlow, *The Christian Socialist*, vol. i., no. 1, Nov. 2, 1850; cf. My Political Creed, by Parson Lot, in vol. i., p. 50.

² Act ii., scene 9. — There were several workmen-poets connected with the movement, as Thomas Cooper, the author of *Purgatory of Suicides* (cousin of Walter Cooper, the tailor), and Gerald Massey, who wrote the *Ballad of Babe Christabel*, and who was secretary of the Working Tailors' Association. Cf. his poems, *etc.*, in *The Christian Socialist*, I., 48, II., 140. England has had many other workmen-poets, as, e.g., Samuel Bamford the radical, Willie Thorn and John Crichley Prince the

and aspirations of the agricultural laborers were well portrayed. Now, however, he published his famous *Alton Locke*, the fictitious biography of a tailor-poet who works himself up from a position of lowly surroundings; and I would advise all who profess sympathy with the oppressed, who need quickening inspirations from noble thoughts, who desire emancipation from petty social prejudices, who wish to see formulated the better impulses of sturdy workmen, to take up this book, instinct with poetic fervor, and full of passionate enthusiasm. It is the best text-book of Christian Socialism, and contains the most scathing denunciations of upper-class indifference. But it appeared at a time when a storm of vituperation and abuse burst on Parson Lot and his fellow-workers. "Tracts full of raving and disreputable rant; mouthpieces of class-selfishness, popular prejudice and ignorant passion; ravings of blasphemy, rapine and nonsense; miserable delusions; mischievous provocations clothed in oily phrases of peace and charity; a clique of wayward-minded men who, from a morbid craving for notoriety or a crazy straining after paradox, have taken up the unhallowed task of preaching the doctrines of Jacobinism and the Jacquerie" — this and much more of the like was said of them in all the reviews and journals.¹ Advertisements were refused by the daily papers, booksellers did not dare to keep copies of their publications, and *The Christian Socialist* was prohibited by the French government from circulating in the realm. A committee of King's College was appointed to investigate Maurice's activity in these dangerous schemes, and he narrowly escaped losing his professorial position. Kingsley was invited to deliver a sermon² in a London church, and at the close, his

weaver poets, and Will Whitmore, the author of *Gilbert Marlowe*. Cf. *Working-men's College Magazine*, I., 143.

¹ Cf. especially an article by Greg, *English Socialism and Communistic Associations*, *Edinburgh Review*, Jan., 1851; J. W. Croker, *Revolutionary Literature*, *Quarterly Review*, Sept., 1851; Holyoake (who has since recognized their merits) in *The Reasoner*; *The Inquirer*, April 19, 1851; *The Eclectic*, vol. 23, p. 508.

² The Message of the Church to the Laboring-men. The closing words were as follows:

"All systems of society which favor the accumulation of capital in a few hands, which oust the masses from the soil which their forefathers possessed of old, which

opinions were openly branded as untrue and dangerous by the officiating rector, Mr. Drew. Replies were made to the strictures in dignified, trenchant articles, showing that this was a crusade not of violence, but against violence, not of revolution, but of reform.¹ One attack, however, of an extremely bitter nature, accusing the author of *Yeast* of purposely inculcating profligacy, was met by Kingsley as follows: "If you or any man impute to me these offences, I will answer you as was answered to the Jesuit of old — *mentiris impudentissime*." Perhaps the best purely economic reply was that of Ludlow, whose lecture displayed an intimate acquaintance with economic literature, and met the economists on their own ground. Here for the first time do we find a successful refutation of the wages-fund theory, which was not finally abandoned by the English economists until the last decade. Ludlow calls attention to the human element in the relation of capital and labor, as materially affecting the law of supply and demand; he asserts that a cheapness which starves the producer is as absurd as a dearness which deters the consumer—an argument which, by the way, can be found already in the works of Boisguillebert and Turgot. Finally he attempts, although not with complete success, to answer the objection that in case there are many associations, you retain all the evils of competition; in case they are all merged into one, you encounter all the evils of monopoly. Ludlow confessed that it would result in a monopoly, but it would be a monopoly of order and justice, not of disorder and injustice. The monopoly they were seeking was one which, instead of narrowing, sought only to extend its circle, and would

reduce them to the state of serfs and day-laborers living on wages and alms, which crush them down with debt or in any wise degrade or enslave them, or deny them a permanent stake in the commonwealth, are contrary to the kingdom of God. . . . Woe unto you that add house to house and field to field, till there be no room left. Woe unto you that are full, for you have received your consolation already. Woe unto you who make a few rich to make many poor. Woe unto you that make merchandise out of the needs of your brethren."

¹ Kingsley, *Who are the Friends of Order?* 1852; and the articles of Furnival, Maurice, Ludlow, *et al.*, in *The Christian Socialist*, I., 98, 114, 122, 130, 227, 257; II., 17.

not cease widening until it had taken in the whole world¹—a project which we must declare to-day to be rather over-idealistic.

In fact, it cannot be denied that the perhaps justifiable indignation of the friends against the prevailing economic doctrines led them into a too vehement opposition. There is no doubt that their at times passionate indiscretion repelled many who were at heart in sympathy in the movement. In denouncing unrestricted competition, and the economic doctrine of "every man for himself," it was quite unnecessary to speak of the whole system of trade as the "disgusting vice of shop-keeping."² The economists were termed by many of them superficial and supercilious plutonomists; while others spoke of that ape-like snatching from one another which we call competition, but which is the anti-social, disintegrating, destructive principle. Men are not apes, said they, and it is but apes' jabber to tell them that competition is the law of the universe.³ Such language was perhaps excusable in the face of those who held that absolute *laissez faire* would bring about a harmony of interests, a state of universal bliss, and who euphuistically called their political economy "benevolence under the guidance of science";⁴ and it is beyond cavil that the arguments of the friends ultimately produced a veering round in public sentiment. But a sober scientific judgment must convict them of exaggeration. Free competition is not all good, nor is it all bad. It has called forth all the self-reliant individual energy to which the marvellous growth of our present civilization is due; it has served as the spur to progress and has equalized many a hardship. On the other hand, it has worked much injustice, and given rise to untold abuses; it has intensified the advantages of the strong and unscrupulous in the conflict with the weak and honorable; it has proved itself incapable in many instances of satisfactorily solving the great problems of our complex industrial society.

¹ Christian Socialism and its Opponents. The substance of the lecture is reprinted in *The Christian Socialist*, Feb. 22, 1851.

² Cf. the remarks of Hughes, *Memoir of a Brother*, p. 114.

³ *The Christian Socialist*, II., 34; *The Spectator*, vol. 57, p. 1339.

⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 15, 1851, p. 9.

But competition is not such a failure as to warrant the demand of its utter annihilation, whether by the collectivists or the co-operative socialists. It is a legitimate principle of modern economic life, whose shortcomings may here and there be compulsorily remedied, but which must still remain the predominant characteristic of social relations. The old extremists erred in absolutely denying that it had any shortcomings, the Christian Socialists erred in desiring to supplant it entirely and immediately. Both were wrong; and it is the province of modern economics to mark out the lines of delimitation between their respective demands.

The legal members of the council of promoters had already for some time been striving for a change in the law of partnership which would afford the co-operative societies an adequate protection. The character of English legislation up to that time had been anything but favorable to independent action on the part of the workmen; and co-operation was as yet illegal, or at least beyond the law. After the report of Slaney's parliamentary committee in 1850, before which J. S. Mill had spoken an earnest word in behalf of the scheme,¹ Ludlow drafted a bill afterwards settled in conjunction with Hughes and Neale; but it required two years of determined and strenuous effort before their object was finally attained by the act of June 11, 1852, which has been called the *magna charta* of co-operative trade and industry—the first law in the civilized world that recognized and protected co-operative societies as separate entities.²

The remainder of the work can be told in a few words. In January, 1852, *The Christian Socialist* was replaced by *The Jour-*

¹ "I think there is no way in which the working classes can make so beneficial a use of their savings, both to themselves and to society, as by the formation of associations to carry on the business with which they are acquainted, and in which they are themselves engaged as workpeople," etc., pp. 71-81 of Report. Mill was prevented from joining the movement only on account of its specifically Christian character.

² The Industrial and Provident Partnerships Act, June 11, 1852, 15 and 16 Vict. c. 31, applying to all occupations except mining and quarrying abroad, and banking. The present law is that of 1876, 39 and 40 Vict. c. 45. Cf. Ludlow and Jones, *Progress of the Working Classes*, p. 48. In a letter to me, Mr. Ludlow writes that there would probably have been serious opposition to the bill had any other name been adopted.

nal of Association, which Hughes undertook to edit, and which now dropped all articles of a political or general nature, and devoted itself wholly to the cause of co-operation. The society modified its name to accord with the new law, and was henceforth known as the Association for promoting Industrial and Provident Societies, the new constitution formulating its principles as follows: 1. That human society is a body consisting of many members, not a collection of warring atoms. 2. That true workmen must be fellow-workers, not rivals. 3. That a principle of justice, not of selfishness, must govern exchanges.¹ At the time of the great strike and lock-out of the amalgamated society of engineers in 1852, the friends sturdily opposed the current of abuse and calumny that threatened to engulf the laborers, and by their letters to the *Times* succeeded in bringing about a more temperate view of the real aims of the trades-unions, thus materially contributing to their advance. The conferences with the artisans were still carried on, and the cause of co-operation in the country districts was greatly strengthened. Annual congresses were held in London, Manchester, Leeds and other cities, and as a result of their activity so-called labor-redemption societies were formed in Leeds and Bury, which maintained the principle that the workmen must become "laboring capitalists."² But toward the close of 1853 the difficulties, inherent in every scheme of co-operation, made themselves apparent, and the productive societies in London began to decline; several were robbed by their treasurers; others suffered from a jealous dissension of the members, and the spirit of envy and indifference began to supplant that of fraternal love and mutual toleration. One of the members of the general association, Jules Chevalier,³ initiated a rival movement of

¹Hughes, *History and Objects of Co-operation*, p. 13. The number of members was now seventy, among them seven lawyers, seven ministers, two M. P.'s, and two peers (Viscount Goderich and Lord Montagu). Cf. Huber, *Reisebriefe*, II., 171.

² Cf. for their principles, and the projected "fourteen days propagandism," *The Christian Socialist*, I., 54; II., 41.

³ Jules Chevalier St. André, a French refugee, and called by Maurice a clever sharper, *Life*, II., 549. But see Huber, *Reisebriefe*, II., 168, for a more favorable account.

his own, and thus hastened the frustration of the original plans. The remaining societies were still supported by the large-hearted generosity of Vansittart Neale, but even his purse was soon emptied. Maurice and his friends felt that the impulse had been given, that they were not competent to carry on the practical details, but might, on the contrary, mar the cause grievously by continuing to meddle with the strictly commercial part of the movement. Neale and the Co-operative League, moreover, had occupied, to some extent, the ground originally taken by the promoters.

It was accordingly decided to establish an institution in which the workmen should gradually be educated to a higher and nobler conception of their social relations. The organization was finally perfected, according to a plan of Maurice,¹ and, early in 1854, the nucleus of teachers for the Workingmen's College was obtained, which counted among its lecturers in that and the following years, some of the most distinguished names in English science and literature.² The promoters devoted all their enthusiasm to the prosecution of this scheme, and the co-operative movement in London consequently languished. Instruction was given in all the higher as well as the elementary branches, a periodical was published devoted to its interests,³ and to-day the college still exists as one of London's most prosperous and beneficent institutions, recruiting the staff of instructors largely from its former pupils, and serving as a bright model to the numerous academies of a similar character, that have sprung up in English towns.⁴

¹ Reprinted in *The Workingmen's College Magazine*, II., 146 *et seq.*

² Ruskin, Dante Rosetti, Alex. Munroe, Fitz-James Stephens, Frederick Harrison, Sheldon Amos, Grant-Duff, Pearson, Brewer, the Lushingtons, Westlake, Brodribb, Huxley, Tyndall, Spottiswoode, etc. Cf. Reports of the Workingmen's College. The college bore some resemblance to the People's College established in Sheffield in 1842 by a dissenting minister, Mr. Bayley. For its history, by Rowbotham, see *Workingmen's College Magazine*, I., nos. 4 and 6. The history of the London College itself is told by Furnival, *ibid.*, II., 144, 165, 188.

³ *The Workingmen's College Magazine*, 1859-1861, edited first by Ludlow, afterwards by Litchfield.

⁴ Ludlow and Jones, *Progress of the Working Classes*, p. 178; Maurice, *The Workman and the Franchise*, at end. The colleges of Salford, Manchester, Ancoats, Wolverhampton, Cambridge, Halifax, Boston, Ayr, are described in the *College Magazine*, I., 17, 21, 41, 51, 53, 101; II., 82.; III., 101.

The friends in later years worked with unflagging zeal in the interests of the workmen; Maurice and Kingsley in their clerical careers never failed to utter words of cheering import; Ludlow wielded his powerful pen in defence of the operatives, and is to-day registrar of the friendly societies; Hughes and Neale are still the staunch supporters of co-operation in England, and preserve the ideal element that has continued to characterize the movement to the present day;¹ but the Christian Socialist movement, as an episode of the national life, practically ended in 1855.

In these seven years of energetic activity a great transformation had been effected. The Christian Socialists had indeed failed to achieve the practical object they had set themselves; the seventeen productive societies in London had all vanished, and the co-operative stores in the country were upheld only by the success of the Rochdale pioneers. Society was still far from conforming to the ideal of true love and fraternity for which Maurice and his followers had so earnestly striven. Kingsley confessed that the associations were a failure because the workingmen were not fit for them,² and Vansittart Neale in a letter to me says:

Individually, the only matter that I regret in respect to my connection with this movement, is that I was in too great a hurry. Led away by the enthusiasm produced by the efforts of the Parisian workers to raise themselves by their united efforts, I advanced considerable sums to various bodies of workers, who were to have all the profits of their work after paying three per cent on the capital; but had the misfortune of losing the capital without having succeeded in setting up one society which lived; and, in consequence, only crippled my own power without benefiting permanently those whom I desired to benefit.³

¹ In a letter to the writer, Mr. Hughes says: "The man here who holds the ropes (may he long do so!) is Mr. Vansittart Neale. . . . He is the finest instance I know of a highly cultivated gentleman absolutely devoting himself to the greatest cause of our time, without a hope of reward in fame or wealth of any kind." Not much less praise is due to Mr. Hughes himself. In the *Manual for Co-operators*, pp. 1-72, 154-169, Hughes and Neale have again lately discussed the subject from their old standpoint.

² *Letters*, II., 35.

³ Mr. Neale believes that Godin's establishment at Guise offers the best solution of the problem for the present day.

And yet much had been accomplished indirectly. Legislative reform had been initiated in the face of bitter opposition, and the ultimate success of co-operation was no longer imperilled by a legal environment which had made all previous attempts so futile. Public sentiment had been aroused by the combined onset of such a singularly brilliant body of authors, and the attitude of the reviewers and the higher classes in general had changed from one of contumely and obloquy to that of respectful appreciation and even approbation. One of their former severe opponents now thought that the associations might become one of the most powerful influences working for the education of the lower orders of the people; and the general effect of the controversy was to convince the public that the movement was neither revolutionary nor dangerous, but calculated to open a future for the working classes such as they had hitherto scarcely dreamt of.¹ Mr. Ludlow writes to me :

I do not think it is for me to say how far Christian Socialism has or has not been a success. I believe I can see its influence working far and wide — and not in this country only — in many who are quite unconscious of the fact. All I would say is that it is a mistake to look upon Christian Socialism as a mere historical event or series of facts. It was a leaven — that is, as modern science teaches us, a living germ — capable of reproduction *ad infinitum*.

But above all, their repeated attacks on the exaggerations of the orthodox economists, and their demonstration of the untenableness of a system based on the assumption of natural laws as an outcome of the principles of self-interest, gradually produced a revulsion of feeling and a sense of growing dissatisfaction with the doctrines of the Manchester school, which finally culminated, only a few years ago, in their complete rejection by the English scientists. The economists, with the honorable exception of Mill, had regarded the movement as hopeless, inadequate and utterly erroneous; for the past ten years there is scarcely an English economist of note who has not become convinced of its ultimate practicability and its undeniable value in helping to

¹ Investments for the Working Classes (by W. R. Greg), *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1852, p. 413. Cf. Hughes, History and Objects of Co-operation, p. 16.

solve present burning problems. The London associations have disappeared, but the efforts of the Christian Socialists remain apparent in the momentum given to the growth of the country societies, which have gradually developed into a huge network of unions throughout the kingdom. But for the Christian Socialists and their vigorous advocacy, the cause of co-operation would to-day be far less hopeful, far less beneficent.

Owen and the Christian Socialists thus each performed a great work, both negative and positive, even though their practical schemes, with few exceptions, failed of any direct success. Positively, they succeeded in moulding the views of their generation, in producing a spirit of greater toleration, in combating the patent evils and abuses of an unrestricted competition, in deprecating the further continuance of such an unhallowed industrial warfare, in stimulating the energies of apathetic legislators and in inciting them to supply defects in the laws which affected the status of the laboring classes. Negatively, they exerted an incalculable influence in preventing outbreaks of class hatred and dissipating the feelings of imagined superiority or sullen resentment; in recalling to each the sense of mutual obligation, and insisting on the maintenance of order; in spreading the gospel of fraternity and peace, and deriding the thought that mere legislative reform would suffice to regenerate society. They started from essentially different premises, and yet, in some respects, reached identical conclusions. From the state they demanded very little that militated against the commonly accepted notions. The state socialism of the present day would have seemed to them absurd and utterly futile, for voluntary, not compulsory, organization was their watchword, peace and good will to all, their battle cry. Owen was a rationalist, but not a materialist. Maurice and Kingsley were Christians, but their Christianity was a liberal humanitarianism, the ultimate result of which must be, as they said, to merge the present distinctions of theology in the unity of a moral life; a catholic faith which includes in its folds all those who, whether repudiating the name of Christians or not, are actuated by a

spirit that makes social reform possible. Owen was a visionary, one-sided enthusiast; the Christian Socialists were broad-minded and full of scientific ability. Owen was a communist, and later a spiritualist; Maurice and Kingsley insisted on the right of property as well as on the duties of proprietors. Owen dabbled in economics and made laughable failures; the others were careful in their experiments, and often content with the enunciation of new principles. Owen believed that the result at which he aimed could be reached by advocating the quintessence of ethics taught by all great religious teachers; the Christian Socialists held more firmly to the doctrines of the church. But all finally reached the same standpoint: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

English Socialism, as exemplified in these two great phases, thus possesses three distinguishing characteristics: opposition to violence, refusal of state-help, enthusiasm for co-operation. The first feature—the insistence on the necessity of reform rather than of revolution—is owing to the fact that the leaders were neither demagogues nor sciolists. Their systems were based on a philosophy, but in each case it was a philosophy of love and toleration—an optimism which though not blind to existing defects, yet firmly held that the good in human nature would ultimately overpower the bad—a conviction that mob force and passionate recrimination would be impotent to bring about a harmony of interests, and that distrust and hatred could not possibly engender confidence and satisfaction.

Secondly, they resolutely set their faces against undue reliance on governmental intervention; and in this they showed their sturdy English independence. Not that they were advocates of the *laissez-faire* Manchester doctrine; on the contrary, they repudiated with vehemence the absolute sufficiency of self-interest. The epithet Socialist would otherwise be an unmeaning abstraction, utterly inapplicable to their case. They demanded an exercise of the police power which should prevent disregard of health and decency, and which should adequately protect the industrial population from the flagrant abuses of the

factory system. But they desired no undue compulsion ; they foresaw that the habit of calling upon the state in every emergency would sap the foundations of manly initiative ; they preferred to regenerate society from within, not from without, and to put their trust in the spontaneous action of groups voluntarily and earnestly working for a common end.

Finally, they effectually promoted the cause of co-operation, both productive and distributive. Starting from different standpoints, they all reached the same conclusion, that combination, and not competition, was to become the keynote of the new order. They doubtless charged the competitive system with much that cannot with justice be laid at its doors ; they assailed existing methods with purely ethical arguments ; their sympathetic indignation often led them to overstep the limits of just criticism. Owen was far too extravagant in his conception of co-operation, which he wished to see practised in every sphere of human activity ; the Christian Socialists centred their attention on the productive societies, but erred in regarding the system as in all respects the necessary antagonist of present methods, and were utterly mistaken in believing that its adoption would completely abolish all competition. But the English Socialists first advanced the cardinal truth, the fruitful idea, that if the workmen wish to take part in the profits of capital and thus gain their share in the growth of national opulence, they must do so by undertaking the functions of capital, by merging their individual possessions into a common stock, and by choosing among themselves the "captains of industry." Trades-unions have done much and will no doubt accomplish far more in the gradual elevation of the working classes ; but their sphere is circumscribed by the very conditions of the problem. They are composed of workmen, and as workmen pure and simple the lot of the artisans cannot be materially altered. An effectual improvement can only be produced by some method which will ensure to the laborers a practical independence, which will lift them as a body out of their position as subordinates, and make them feel that they are all equally responsible for the evil, equally benefited by the good that may result from

their united efforts. This the system of industrial co-operation — whether it prove the ultimate solution of the problem or not — can achieve; this in spite of temporary failures and premature attempts it may one day realize; and this, when accomplished, will ever be regarded as the outgrowth of an idea for which we must above all thank the English Socialists.

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